



News Release

Laguna Atascosa NWR
22817 Ocelot Road
Los Fresnos, Texas 78566
(956)748-3607
(956)748-3609 fax

www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa

For Release: May 9, 2014

Contacts: Marion Mason, Ranger, 956-748-3607 ext 119 OR Hilary Swarts, Wildlife Biologist, 956-245-9445

Second Young Ocelot Discovered at Refuge

Rio Hondo, TX – After discovering a female ocelot kitten in March, wildlife biologist Dr. Hilary Swarts, reported another new young ocelot has now been discovered, this time a male. He was recently trapped on Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge and his coat pattern did not match that of any previously known ocelots from the refuge's collection of trip camera photos. He is estimated to be 12-14 months old and appears healthy. At this age he has transitioned from kitten to juvenile status, although he will stay with his mother for up to another year before going out on his own. With limits on equipment, staffing and access to private lands, censusing such an elusive cat species is challenging. The fact that two young ocelots remained undetected for almost a year opens the possibility that there could be more ocelots in the area that have not yet been identified. The current number of known ocelots on the refuge is now 12, with 5 females and 7 males. The current estimated number of ocelots in Texas remains less than 50.

To boost the genetics of the refuge's ocelot population, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is working with Mexico to bring an adult female ocelot to Texas within the next year. Preliminary results of studies on several Mexican ocelot populations show they are numerous enough to spare a breeding female that will boost the population in the U.S.

The public plays an important role in keeping this endangered wild cat in the Rio Grande Valley. "The public can contribute to our knowledge of ocelots by watching for ocelots throughout the valley," says Swarts. The public is encouraged to report any possible sightings of live or dead ocelots to the refuge by calling 956-748-3607, or after hours 956-784-7520.

To learn more about ocelots in south Texas, visit the refuge's website www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa.

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